

MANIFESTATIONS OF LOVE

An insight into the wisdom
behind trials and tribulations in
light of the Qur'aan and Sunnah.

SUMAYYA MALIK

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To the reader...

I pray my work has reached you in the best of health and Iman.

As Muslims, we all possess a basic understanding of how our short-lived life in this world is a test of loyalty to our Creator, Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). The journey of life is unquestionably filled with temptations and obstacles for all those who embark on it.

This short yet hopefully concise book will enlighten you with wisdoms and reassurances of how Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) manifests His love for us through blessing us

with the tribulations throughout our lives. I trust it will enable you to develop a deeper understanding of the endless mercies concealed within each trial and how to embrace them as a gift that was sent to draw you nearer to Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) rather than something of mere inconvenience. You will stumble upon remedies for the days that this seems near to impossible, which I pray will leave your heart full of hope and your soul full of warmth.

The excerpts from the Holy Qur'aan and the prophetic narrations of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) are a source of solace for those whose souls have accepted defeat and hearts are full of nothing but despair, assuring them that even the beloved Prophets and Messengers were tested to great lengths and such tests are not an indication of being deprived of divine love. Moreover, every test and tribulation in a believer's life is a means of deepening the love between him and his ever-merciful Lord.

As you delve further into its pages I pray you learn more of this profound love Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) grants to even the greatest of sinners and realize that as long as we hold on to it and strive to reciprocate it, He will never

leave you stranded and you will always find your strength in Him.

ONE A divine purpose

“We have not created Jinn and Mankind except that they worship me.” [Adh Dhariyaat, Verse 56]

A verse with a clear message. The sole aim of our lives and the reason for us being brought into existence is to carry out the servitude of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). If we were to actually ponder upon this verse and understand its reality, we would no doubt come to the realization that nothing else is of any value in the eyes of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) and neither should we, as His lawful servants, hold anything in higher esteem.

The sweetness of faith can only be experienced by those

who grasp that the ability to worship Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) and carry out the obligations made incumbent upon us, is the very meaning of our lives. Those who have felt this beautiful satisfaction will themselves appreciate that this single element is what the foundation of an enriched life is built upon. A person who discovers himself becoming absorbed in the sweetness of faith, finds himself striving to excel solely in this single cause, forsaking all else. This is when he is able to fully comprehend the words of his Lord in the above verse, as he will desire nothing more than to serve Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), almost disregarding all other aspects of his life. The deficiencies in any other parts of his life

will be of no interest or importance to him, regardless of how severe they may be. When an individual has attained such a deep level of understanding, he will be able to live his life in harmony with Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) decree and will, concluding that everything else comes secondary to worshipping and gaining the pleasure of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). No matter what trials or tribulations he may be made to endure, he will be wise enough to know that all of them have been appointed an end and that they themselves are a form of worship; one he should attempt to excel in by displaying the beauty of patience.

TWO Allah tests you because He loves you

‘For whoever Allah intends goodness, He afflicts him with tribulations.’ [BUKHARI]

A person being tested is not to be perceived as him being punished. Often, Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) is preparing him for a greater good that only He holds the knowledge of. The ‘goodness’ referred to in the above Hadith may well be some kind of solace in this fleeting worldly life, as well as a definite promise of Allah’s (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) most bountiful treasures in the life that is everlasting. In essence, if he bears it patiently, any trial is a blessing in disguise which befalls the believer

in order to draw him nearer to Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala). It comes to elevate his rank and also remind him that no one has control over anything other than Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala).

Every believer differs in his level of Iman and submission to Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala). There are those whose tongues are always engaged in Dhikr, while there are others whose hearts are absorbed in divine love and an awareness of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala); these people are mindful of the fact that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) is always with them and knows of every action they do and word they utter. There are those believers who have been enticed by worldly temptations and desires but

have abandoned them in order to attain the pleasure of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). There are a group among the believers who submit themselves in the path of serving the creation of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), knowing that through their service they will gain unimaginable bounties and the benevolence of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). Although every believer strives to immerse himself in the prayer and worship of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), it is easy and inevitable to become engrossed in worldly affairs and at times overlook and dismiss the purpose he was created for. Sadly, there are many believers who become so consumed by their worldly life that they fail to remember and honor Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) in the manner that He rightfully deserves, occasionally even forsaking the duties that have

been made obligatory upon them.

Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has promised every believing woman and man an eternal home in the gardens of Paradise and being chosen to be amongst the Muslimeen is proof that He wants to admit you into His everlasting mercy. When our deeds and devotion do not match the degree of Jannah that has been reserved for us, Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) formulates hardships for us so that we can reach a level of Iman that is deserving of it through the act of patience. This hurdle encourages us to divert our attentions to the One who decreed it and the only being who is able to expel it from

our lives. Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) prolongs the length of the hardship as He is eager for us to invoke Him by way of Du'aa. When a single trial does not prove to be sufficient to divert the believer's thoughts in the direction of his Lord and the Hereafter, he encounters another in the hope that this will be his spiritual awakening. He encounters affliction after affliction until it dawns on him that nothing holds higher importance than the happiness of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), this world is momentary and the One who created him is his greatest support and strength.

Through his tribulations, the believer soon learns that although people may help him for a day or two, persistently burdening them with his woes will cause them

to eventually become weary and tiresome of him. He may well discover a handful of genuine people who will remain a supportive pillar during his dark times, but he will come to acknowledge that they do not possess the ability to eliminate his struggles as they themselves are undoubtedly limited as human beings. This power belongs to Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) alone. The believer then begins to realize that the misfortune which has struck him is from Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) and can be resolved by Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) alone. It is a blessing in disguise which will surely cause him temporary inconvenience, but it will also honour him in unthinkable ways and will ultimately draw him closer to his Lord.

This realization brings a deeper level of understanding of the intimate relationship between himself as a servant and the Almighty Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). He submits himself and starts to pray fervently to his Lord and experiences that the only time his heart is fully tranquil and his mind free of worry, is when he engages in conversation with Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) and leaves his troubles in His capable and loving hands.

Even if the believer's pleas are not granted an immediate divine response, he unravels the secrets of enjoyment of intimate talks with Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). He seeks pleasure in those private moments that he shares with Allah and places more reliance in Him

as he starts to detect the gentle reminders Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) sends his way in order to comfort and reassure him. As his bond with Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) strengthens, he pays little attention to what others can do for him as he now knows without Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) nothing is possible and seeking solace in Him alone can make any situation bearable. The believer realizes that although this tribulation has caused him obvious discomfort, Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) in His infinite love has erased his sins, raised him in rank and has blessed him greatly because of it.

THREE The most beloved to Allah are faced with the severest of afflictions

It is conveyed in a prophetic narration by Mus'ab ibn Sa'eed, that his father enquired: "Oh Messenger of Allah, which people are tested most severely?" Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) replied, "The prophets, then the best and the next best. A person will be tested according to the level of his faith. If his faith is strong, his trials will be more severe. If he is weak in his faith, he will be tested according to his strength in his religion. The servant will continuously be tested until he is left walking upon the earth without any sin." [TIRMIDHI]

Every man to walk the face of the earth will certainly be

tested through trials in some shape or form, as the world itself was made as a place of examination to test our loyalty to Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). While there is no denying that some tests and tribulations will deeply grieve a believer and leave him in a state of complete despair, tribulations are in fact a bestowal of mercy. The key is to know that everything, whether good or bad, is short-lived-just like human life itself.

A believer should frequently evaluate how he is handling the gift of suffering. If he notices himself in frequent praise and prayer to Allah (Subhaanahu

Wata'aala) at the strike of calamity, he should be reassured that it has been sent to elevate him in rank and because of it, he has attained divine pleasure. If he observes himself feeling dispirited and dejected, he should firstly rectify his mentality. He should be thankful that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has enabled him to realize his mishandling of the situation and realize that He has sent this trial to spiritually cleanse him so that he should return to Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) in the condition that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) is happy with him. The human mind is easily influenced by the whispers of the devil, but a positive mindset is absolutely vital.

As humans, we are quick to become despondent,

especially when we have been enduring something for a particularly lengthy period of time. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) and indeed all the Messengers prior to him, endured a great deal in their personal lives and also at the hands of the nations they were sent to whilst inviting people to the Oneness of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). They were taunted, mocked, exiled and were often subjected to physical torture along with their companions and loved ones. In addition to this, they lived in conditions of utmost poverty and endured several losses during their lifetimes, all the while upholding the responsibility of delivering the message of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) and inviting people to His Deen, Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has revealed many stories of the lengths the Messengers were tried and tested in order to console Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) repeatedly mentions their

respective stories to reassure Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) that he was not alone in his suffering and to remind us that every suffering has an end when the oppressors are given their comeuppance.

It is fundamental for a believer to acquaint himself with the stories of the Messengers and understand the lessons behind them so that he is able to take comfort in them, just as Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) was advised to seek solace in them. An insightful believer will derive reassurance in the knowledge that every hurdle can be a means of atonement for his sins and gaining nearness to Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), if he bears it without complaint hopeful of a reward from Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). The Hadith visibly enforces that the more greatly a person is tested, the more he is purified of his sins until he is entirely cleansed and ready to meet his

Lord in the state of being free from sin.

A true believer will see the beauty in Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) afflicting him even if it is due to his sins; so that he is stripped of any sin in this temporary life and is then able to fully enjoy and appreciate the unimaginable bounties of the next world. He is tested in this short life so that he is not held accountable for his shortcomings on the Day of Resurrection and he is not punished even for a split second due to him compensating for his sins before his death. A believer should remember that every man that attained the love of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) was not able to do so without enduring hardships of great severity and that the hardships in themselves are a form of Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) love for him.

FOUR A believer is rewarded for the prick of a thorn

‘There is no Muslim who is afflicted with pain as much as the prick of a thorn, or more, but that Allah will expiate his sins, just as leaves fall from a tree.’

[SAHEEHAYN]

What a beautiful religion wherein we as believers are compensated for the smallest of inconveniences and given glad tidings of a reward for simply displaying a cheerful countenance! One who understands the depth of this Hadith and its message will only rejoice upon any discomfort that he is made to endure and feel compelled to utter nothing but praise for Allah (Subhaanahu

Wata’aala). Knowing that our sins are being washed away and our ranks elevated can only gladden a believing heart that bears any misfortune with wisdom, in the hope that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) has accepted him and is pleased with him. If Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) has promised to recompense a believer for something as insignificant as a prick, he can only imagine what he will be rewarded for the devastating losses and heart-wrenching times of grief that are indeed a part of human life.

Those believers whose spirits have been crushed by sorrow should delight in the knowledge that Allah

(Subhaanahu Wata'aala) declares: *"I am with those whose hearts are torn."* [HADITH QUDSI]

There is no greater source of comfort for a believer in his hour of distress than knowing Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) Himself has chosen to remain by his side in order to reassure and console him. This hadith is affirmed by Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) words in the Holy Qur'aan: *"Verily Allah is with those who show patience."* [Al-Anfaal, Verse 46] This is an indication that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has promised to be with a believer from the moment he is met with a misfortune. Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) help is never delayed but arrives at the very striking of a calamity. In his observation of those who Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) sends to

console him and the depth of his understanding of the wisdom behind the misfortune that has struck him, a believer can detect the subtle signs of His Godly presence that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) makes apparent to him.

"Be patient: verily 'Aafiyah is for those who are fearful of God." [Hud: Verse 49] Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has vowed to reward a believer with 'Aafiyah- to be in the state of being generally sound and in the protection of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), away from harm. To be with 'Aafiyah is to feel satisfied with what a believer has been granted by Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) and to be free from anxiety. If a believer displays forbearance in spite of the magnitude of his troubles, Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) will surely relieve him of his burdens and fill his mind with such a sense of tranquillity as though no

sadness had visited him. In short, if the adversity is endured in a manner that is pleasing to Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), He will bring forward such a time wherein no trace of it remains.

Adopting an attitude of tolerance is without doubt a skill that that can only be mastered over time. A believer who strives to become a person of this nature will indeed have several lapses in the initial stages. With the passing of time, he will find that he has become resilient and more steadfast. He will be satisfied with the knowledge that every opportunity that he exerted self-control was an opportunity for him to gain tremendous reward and be repaid with something finer.

FIVE Grief is a natural human emotion

'And that it is He [Allah] who makes [man] laugh and it is He who makes him weep.' [An Najm, Verse 43]

The fashioning of mankind has been based on the middle ground. The angels have been created without defect and free from the inclination to commit sin. They exist solely to perform the assigned tasks that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has allocated to their individual beings. Animals on the other hand, do not possess the intelligence to distinguish between right and wrong and will not be held accountable for any wrongdoing to another. They will be avenged for any injustice inflicted upon them and will be destroyed thereafter. For them

there is no concept of reward in the form of 'Heaven' or idea of retribution in the form of 'Hell'.

Our entire being is rooted on the theory of moderation. It is expected of a believer to be inclined towards sin, just as he is expected to feel motivated to carry out good deeds. Similarly, he has been designed in such a way that while at times he will experience periods of general positivity, there will be several occasions when he suffers from emotional gloom and despair. This is perfectly acceptable. However, the condition is that he does not lose hope

in the mercy of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). That he believes Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) will allow his condition to improve and also give him happiness and reasons to rejoice. Humankind has been created with the ability to experience both joy and sorrow, so it is only natural that a believer is filled with delight in times of happiness and ease and that he is slightly saddened by any calamity that befalls him. Grief is one of the emotions instilled within us and displaying signs of sorrow is not a sign of weakness in one's faith.

When Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) was faced with the loss of his beloved son Ibrahim, it is narrated that he said: *"The eyes send their tears and the heart is saddened, but we do not say anything except that*

which pleases our Lord. Indeed, Oh Ibrahim, we are bereaved by your departure from us.” [BUKHARI]

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) was made to endure the most difficult thing anyone could possibly endure; the death of a child. Through his words, a believer learns that feeling pain and heartache in such times is evitable and that there is nothing wrong in exhibiting such emotions by means of weeping and shedding tears. Furthermore, through this example, a believer also digests the extent to which mourning is permitted; it is acceptable to cry and speak of what pains you, as long you remember

that it is from Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) and that He will surely compensate you for it.

Another example of prophetic anguish can be found in the Holy Qur’an in the story of Ya’qoob (Alayhis Salaam). Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) mentions: *‘And he (Ya’qoob) said, “Oh, my sorrow over Yusuf,” and his eyes became white from grief because of the sorrow that he suppressed.’ [Yusuf, Verse 84]*

Ya’qoob (Alayhis Salaam) was alienated from Yusuf (Alayhis Salaam) for forty years! For forty years he grieved while yearning to see Yusuf (Alayhis Salaam) and despite being a Prophet of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala), he was so overcome with emotion that he lost his eyesight. The

story of Ya'qoob (Alayhis Salaam) also emphasizes becoming sorrowful after some time has passed is normal as Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) makes apparent in His words: *"They said: "By Allah! You will never cease remembering Yusuf until you become weak with old age, or until you become of the dead."* [Yusuf, Verse 85] Ya'qoob's (Alayhis Salaam) sorrow was still as fresh as the day he lost Yusuf (Alayhis Salaam) several years later although he was a Prophet of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), who no doubt possessed unwavering faith that his trial and struggle were not in vain and that he would surely be compensated for it.

The story of Ya'qoob (Alayhis Salaam) consists of a clear moral, which is that it is perfectly acceptable to feel anguish and pain; in fact, it is expected. Whether a believer displays his pain or not is not an indication of the

strength of his faith. He is no less of a believer whether he becomes overwhelmed with emotion at the strike of calamity or after a length of time passes. The condition for this is that a believer remains firm in his conviction that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) will answer his pleas at a time that He has appointed and, in a way that He sees most appropriate. Ya'qoob (Alayhis Salaam) still retained strong faith even though he was completely grief stricken.

Ya'qoob's (Alayhis Salaam) words *"Certainly no one despairs of Allah's Mercy, except the people who disbelieve"* [Yusuf, Verse 87] highlight the severity in losing hope and becoming despondent. To assume that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) will not respond to his pleas is a sign that one is falling in grave sin and therefore failing the test Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has appointed for him, as opposed to reaping immense reward

for enduring it. A true believer experiences and expresses sadness, whilst remaining patient and adopting forbearance as He knows that the promise of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) is undeniably true and that better days will follow.

SIX Mental Illness is not a punishment

“Oh Allah, I seek refuge in You from anxiety and sorrow, from weakness, laziness, miserliness and cowardice, the burden of debts and from being overpowered by men.” [BUKHARI]

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) acknowledged mental illness and depression to be an ailment in their own rights fourteen hundred years ago, yet sadly it is still frowned upon and considered a taboo subject in several cultures today. All of the aforementioned struggles are something every person will undeniably have to endure at some point and so have been directly addressed as *‘Indeed Allah does not shy away from [mentioning] the truth.’*

[BUKHARI] There is a remedy for illness and a solution to every problem within the Qur'aan and Sunnah of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). While it is important to make an active effort to do our part in rectifying our condition, it is also fundamental to seek the aid of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) by means of supplication and appreciate that the remedy in His hands alone.

“Your Lord has neither forsaken you nor has He become displeased.” [Ad Duhaa, Verse 3]

Those who suffer from mental illness may have been told ‘You need to pray more often’ or ‘It’s because you’re not religious enough.’ Firstly,

comments of this nature are incredibly cruel and disheartening to hear, especially at a time when a believer is facing such overwhelming inner turmoil. Through His words, Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) teaches humankind how to deal with loved ones or indeed anyone who is in a state of mental distress- with kind words and reassurance. Both mental and physical illnesses are ailments in their own right, and both deserve the right attention in order to be overcome. Just as it is not possible to ‘pray away’ a physical condition, it is not possible to rid oneself of a mental illness simply through prayer alone.

People who battle mental illnesses are immeasurably brave; they are battling against their own thoughts and minds! As we can only imagine, this can be extremely

draining. What they need is reassurance and calming words rather than taunts or negative comments. Constant support and positive words can have a profound effect on the human mind and shrink the problem a considerable amount.

We are all familiar with the way our spirits can be lifted when somebody pays us a compliment or offers us a kind word. We will have probably also encountered how being mocked or being given a single cutting remark plays heavily on the mind or the detrimental impact it can have on someone's self-esteem. Those who are of a particularly sensitive nature will be all too familiar with these emotions. It is extremely important to be especially cautious with

our choice of words when dealing with people with mental health issues. Harsh words will only breed more negativity in their minds. Their tendency to slip into a dark place and become unhappy is much quicker in comparison to that of an average person. Once they have entered this place of misery and gloom, it can take a considerable amount of effort and time before they are able to feel their usual selves again, which is why great care should be taken not to trigger this state in the first place.

Every single person has had to battle negative thoughts and an overpowering feeling of melancholy at some point in their life. The backstory of the revelation of Surah Ad-Duhaa proves that the ability to suppress showcasing one's

emotions is not definitive of his piety.

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) had not received divine revelation from Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) for quite some time. The most common narration from Ibn Abbas (Radiallahu Anhuma) states that fifteen days had passed since Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) had been visited by Jibraeel (Alayhis Salaam) or been granted any divine inspiration by Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). Some Mufasssireen quote the span of the interval to be as short as two days, while others say it stretched for as long as forty days. To add to this, the Quraysh of Makkah began to taunt Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi

Wasallam) suggesting that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) hated him and had forsaken him.

Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) not only directly responds to this criticism with the words in verse three, Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) also reminds Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) of the many instances before, when He relieved Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) of burden after burden; in nurturing him when he was made an orphan, guiding him when he was unaware and in blessing him when he had little. This served as a reminder that He would always continue to do so and never desert him.

Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) also gifts Rasulullah

(Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) for his patience in the verse *“Your Lord will grant you so much so that you shall be well-pleased”* [Ad Duhaa, Verse 5] As we can comprehend, there could be no greater delight than the gift of intercession for his ummah and followers knowing the degree of empathy and compassion Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) possessed. This is an affirmation of the verse *“Verily after hardship there is ease”* [Ash Sharh, Verse 6] showing that Allah’s (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) promise is undeniably true. Allah’s (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) aid will definitely arrive, and a believer will one day be free of what has befallen him, despite how bleak things might seem.

This chapter is a reassurance of two things. Not only does it promise those who suffer from mental afflictions that their situation will improve and that they will be rewarded with times of happiness and ease, it also confirms that they will be compensated for having to endure such inner conflict in a beautiful way. They have been afflicted with a trial of such severity because Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) believes they are strong enough to manage it without losing faith in Him, but it is their duty to draw strength and prove it.

Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) also shows humankind a way of dealing with grief or sadness within the final verse of Surah Ad-Duha with the words *“But as for the favour of your Lord, speak of it”* [Verse 11]. In reminding

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) of some of the many favours bestowed upon him, Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) not only consoles His beloved, but also provides Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) and indeed all those who ponder upon the Holy Qur'aan with another form of upliftment. Count the favours of your Lord upon you. Do not permit the single negative thing weighing you down to allow you to forget the innumerable blessings Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has showered you with and how He has gratified you in your condition over several of His creation.

SEVEN No moment lasts forever

Believing that 'fate'- all good and bad is from Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) is one of the seven articles of faith and whoever disregards this concept is considered to be greatly lacking in his faith. Our fleeting life in this world is temporary and a place of continuous test. To hope for a life that is free from worry is incredibly foolish as Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has declared in the Holy Qur'an: *"And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits but give good tidings to the patient."* [Al Baqarah, Verse 155] It is easy to become overwhelmed by our problems and feel as though the strain of the entire world is weighing on our shoulders, but a believer learns from this verse that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has promised to

test every single man to tread the face of this earth with affliction. It should also bring him immense comfort that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has likewise warranted in the Holy Qur'an: *'Allah will bring, after hardship, ease.'* [At Talaq, Verse 7]

Human life is a fluctuation of both good times and bad. A believing heart is expected to show gratitude during times of bliss and adopt an attitude of tolerance when life becomes difficult. The universe is filled with signs of hope for a believer, if he observes

carefully enough. There is proof that darkness is not perpetual and a promise of new beginnings in the rising of the sun. There is faith of physical healing and spiritual revival in the way the clouds send forth rainfall in order to nourish barren lands. Likewise, the onset of old age is evidence that outer beauty will diminish, and that the human body cannot retain its physical strength forever. Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) shows us this tradition of evolvement through the universe. The night follows the day. Benevolent rains expel Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) wrath which he exposes in the form of thunder and lightning. Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has fixed an appointed time span for joy, just as He has done so for hardships. We must sail through the troubled waters in order to find the treasures Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala)

has promised us at shore.

Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has already shown us the fulfilment of this oath in the traditions and stories of the Prophets and Messengers, peace and blessings be upon them all. Ayyub (Alayhis Salaam) was tested with his children, his wealth and his health to the extent that no part of his body was in working order except for his heart and tongue; which he used for the remembrance and praise of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) and not a soul remained by his side except for his devoted wife. He bore this time of loss and illness with forbearance and Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) not only restored his health,

but also granted him more wealth, cattle and children than before.

Yunus' (Alayhis Salaam) faith remained resolute and he stayed hopeful of Allah's aid in the depths of darkness after he was swallowed whole by a whale and remained in its belly for forty days. In return for his endurance, Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) decreed that his entire nation was to be the only people to entirely accept Islam and has also praises them in the Holy Qur'an. Ibrahim (Alayhis Salaam) was made to undergo trial after trial, which earned him the title of 'Khaleelullah'- the friend of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). Ibrahim (Alayhis Salaam) was forced to come to terms with the fact that his father was of the Mushrikeen and would not receive the forgiveness of

Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). He was thrown into a fire by his own people and came very close to sacrificing his dear son Ismaa'eel. Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) blessed him with prophethood, and Muslims are still made to honour him year after year by following his footsteps on the day of Eid ul Adha and during the journey of Hajj.

All of the Prophets were tested with hardships of such extremity as they were the firmest in belief and the dearest of all creation to Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). Every Prophet displayed utmost resilience and devotion to Allah by engaging himself in the praise and remembrance of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). The Holy Qur'aan is filled with stories that tell us that after being afflicted with the gravest of adversities, they were not only granted relief but also given more than what they had before. A believer with true understanding and wisdom will take reassurance

from the lives of the Prophets of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) and be assured that his hardship will not only pass but will be replaced with great times of ease.

EIGHT The depth of divine love

Sayyidina Umar reports in a prophetic narration: A group of prisoners of war were brought before Rasulullah, amongst whom there was a nursing mother. When she encountered a child within the prisoners, she would embrace it and nurse it. Rasulullah said to us, "Do you think this woman would throw her child in the fire?" We said "No, not if she was able to prevent it." Rasulullah declared: "Allah is more compassionate towards His slaves than a mother is towards her child." [BUKHARI]

Manifestations of Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) love can be detected in endless ways and in the subtlest of forms by those who are able to recognize it. If it wasn't for

divine love, we would not have been preferred amongst His creation to be from the people of Iman. It is because of Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) divine love that we are not deprived of a healthy, fully functioning body and daily blessings within our sustenance despite our sins filling the space between the heaven and the earth. It is out of His love for us that He readily forgives us for the most gravest of sins and endows us with an abundance of opportunities to repent and return to Him in the form of the breaking of a new dawn.

The mercy of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) is in no way limited to His believing or righteous slaves; His mercy enshrouds us all. Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) is Most Just and favours all His creation with His bounties and blessings. He grants shelter and sustenance to the smallest creature and ensures that every single creation that exists, receives the provisions that was destined for it. If someone was to wrong us, we would feel they are undeserving of our compassion and limit the favours we do for them due to our flawed nature as human beings. Yet Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) provides wealth, health, food and shelter to even those who ascribe partners with Him. They reject His message. They deny Him. They insult Him. Yet Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) also chooses for His mercy to reach them, not withholding any rations from them

although they continuously disregard Him.

If this is the extent of love and compassion Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) shows those who disbelieve in Him, one can only imagine the dimension of love and mercy He possesses for us as His believing servants. Not only has the believer been granted incessant blessings that reach the sky, he is given the willpower to carry out acts of devotion to show gratitude to Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). Not only has a believer been favoured over several of Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) creation in more ways than

he could calculate or fathom, he is able to feel remorse for any lacking in the fulfilment of his duty of servitude to Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala).

Had it been possible that a mother was able to decide the destiny of her child, she would leave no stone unturned in warranting that he receives nothing but the utmost best. A mother's love is so powerful that she would readily go to the greatest lengths to remove any obstacles in the path of her child without a second thought. The love of a mother for her child is so profound that she would gladly endanger herself in exchange for the safety and protection of her child. A mother's love is selfless. She would willingly sacrifice her own happiness to spare her child of discomfort and inconvenience of any kind.

A believer can only begin to comprehend the depth of Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) love for him. Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has shown us an example of His compassion in the form of our mothers. As recorded in 'SAHEEHAYN', Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) mercy consists of one hundred parts, of which only one part has been sent to the world. Whatever mutual kindness and respect can be observed in all of the creation of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), is only a single percent of the benevolence of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). How can a believer think that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) detests him when calamity strikes him? How can a believer worry that Allah (Subhaanahu

Wata'aala) has forsaken him when a response to his supplications is delayed because there is something much greater awaiting him? How can a Lord who is filled with tenderness and grace deny a believer who knocks relentlessly on the doors of His mercy, patiently waiting for them to be flung open?

NINE So which of the favours of your Lord can you deny?

“Look to those lower than you and do not look to those above you lest you view the favours of Allah as trivial.”
[MUSLIM]

These concise words of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) teach the believers a priceless lesson; the key to happiness is to be at peace with what Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has blessed you with. In order to be able to do this, it is essential to make a conscious effort to praise and be thankful towards Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) for every bit of positivity or goodness that He grants you, no matter how small.

An active way to remind ourselves of the many ways Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has favoured us over several of His creation is to spend our time and wealth aiding those who are less fortunate. Spending time with those that have less than him, naturally fills a person with appreciation for how Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has favoured him by not depriving him of several bounties he would have otherwise overlooked.

Every single person tells a different story through the journey of their life and no two journeys are ever the same. Every person will experience moments of

bliss and also undoubtedly encounter loss and misfortune. It is only when something is withdrawn, do we truly value it. Happiness can only be appreciated through the occurrence of grief. Physical wellbeing is taken for granted until it is replaced by sickness. The luxury of wealth is undervalued until a person experiences financial strain. The importance of family and friends is only understood when we are separated by distance or death. Every person will face these trials to a certain extent in life. Whilst some may encounter such trials to a higher degree, no person will live life completely content and free of stress.

Someone might appear to be living a blissful life, but nobody knows what occurs behind closed doors or behind

the scenes. No one will admit that he is completely content with all the aspects of his life, there will surely be some part of it he would readily improve if he had the means or was given the opportunity. This world is only passing and far from a place of luxury and comfort for a believer. We may well come across certain individuals who are leading a life of contentment, but only they know of the struggles they had to overcome for them to be granted such times of ease. It is essential to bear in mind that no matter who a person is, they will be made to endure severe hardships at some stage in their life. Everyone has their fair share of sorrow and joy and even if life is not particularly great at the moment, you will indeed be blessed with times of

ease of your own. You will find many favours to be thankful for even on the darkest of days.

Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) tells us in the Holy Qur'aan: *"And if you were to count the favours of Allah, you would not be able to enumerate them. Surely man is indeed unjust, most disbelieving."* [Ibrahim, Verse 34] From our physical bodies themselves to the minutest creation of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), everything has been created to benefit man in some way. Every single vessel or vein within our bodies, no matter how narrow, plays an integral part in enabling us to function as we should and contributes towards the human anatomy. Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has even fashioned the smallest of flies in such a manner that whilst one of its

wings consists of poison, the other contains the cure.

Being chosen to be amongst the Muslim ummah in the present era is something we should show our utmost gratitude for. Had Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) wanted, He could have decided on making us from amongst the animals or a mere tree. Yet Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) picked us to be from the 'Ashraful Makhluq- the noblest of creation', who even the angels envy. Secondly, Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) selected you to be a Mu'min and a Muslim; to lead a life of worship and devotion to Him. Those who are reverts will truly be able to appreciate what it means to be born on 'fitrah' and

to be born into a family and household that was already rightly guided. Lastly, we have been honoured to be included within the followers of the most compassionate and selfless of Messengers, whose Ummah will make up a third of the people of paradise and who has vowed not to enter Jannah until he has successfully interceded on behalf of his unworthy Ummah.

Through the aforementioned Hadith, we also learn that constant comparison with those who have been endowed with more in certain aspects of their lives will never allow us to be happy. After all, 'comparison is the thief of joy.' Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) Himself mentions in the Holy Qur'aan: '*Above every possessor of knowledge is one more knowing.*' [Yusuf, Verse 76] Similarly, we will surely

encounter many who have been favoured more than us in every aspect of our lives and also countless people who have been given so little compared to us. Whatever Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has or has not blessed you with is sufficient for you to live this given moment. What we feed the mind feeds the soul, which is why it is crucial to keep a positive outlook in life. Yes, there will always be someone who has been entrusted with more, but there are also billions of people who could only dream of living the life you have been granted by Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala).

TEN The signs in Allah's creation

Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) informs the believers in the Holy Qur'aan: *“Verily in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for men of understanding.”* [Aal Imran: Verse 190]

Spending time in the great outdoors and connecting with nature has been proven to have a tremendous effect on a person's general mood and their levels of stress. Taking out a few minutes of our day to appreciate the natural world or even having a great window-view in the workplace is known to relieve stress. Natural settings have been said to decrease systolic blood pressure and improve

sleeping habits which can have an overall positive impact on a person's wellbeing.

As Muslims, we will be able to recognize the power and sovereignty of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) through each and every one of His splendid creations. If we look to the canopy that is the sky above our heads, we will be able to ponder upon the truth of Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) words when He says *"Have they not then observed the sky above them, how We have constructed it and beautified it, and how there are no rifts therein?"* [Qaaf, Verse 6]. If we were to try and comprehend the different types

of animals and insects that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has brought into existence and how He has promised: *"For no single thing exists that does not have its source with Us; and nought do we bestow from on high unless it be in accordance with a measure well-defined."* [Al Hijr, Verse 21] we would be left in awe of how He is watchful of every single one his creations and neglects no one. Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) feeds and shelters every bird, fish, insect and other type of animal without fail. If we were to try and name those we are familiar with we would identify countless species, but as we are aware the kingdom of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) is indeed vast and He has created an 'unseen' world that is concealed from the knowledge of mankind.

Not only has Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) created everything that exists for the benefit and aid of humankind, we are able to ponder upon the power and might of their creator through the way they have been designed and the manner in which they function. A believer could spend an entire lifetime observing the majesty of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) simply by studying the signs he is able to detect within nature alone. The way the sun and moon respectively provide light and hope for all fills us with awe of the greatness of their maker. Thunder is a reminder of the wrath of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), while the rains that follow it allow us to remain hopeful in the mercy of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). The mountains and rocks serve as a

reminder of the strength and loftiness of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). The way the ocean retains a whole world of creatures and organisms completely unknown to us should reassure us that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) is indeed capable of responding to our prayers when the entire universe is in His control.

As stated in the above verse, whichever part of nature a believer was to look to, he would be compelled to marvel over the grandeur of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) Himself. If the creation has been fashioned to function in such a flawless manner, one can only imagine the degree of perfection of the designer Himself. How can the One who has created such an impeccable system not have a wisdom behind our suffering and a cure for our pain?

ELEVEN Allah is greater than any of your problems

“If you were to rely on Allah as He should be relied on, He would provide for you as He provides for the birds. They go out early in the morning hungry and return in the evening full.” [TIRMIDHI]

This Hadith teaches us an element that is essential to life; reliance in Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala). This is to have full conviction that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) will provide an answer to all of the predicaments in our lives and surely respond to every desperate plea, in the way that He sees most befitting and at the time He has determined.

It is vital for a believer to grasp that whatever Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) has ordained for him to endure is in his best interests and that he will never be abandoned or forsaken; Allah’s (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) assistance is near and will indubitably come. The One who holds up the sky without any pillar and sends down rainfall to revive the earth and quench the thirst of all those who tread the face of it surely possess the efficacy to unburden you of any misfortune that befalls you; no matter how impossible it may seem.

Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has made promise to suffice for anyone that is reliant upon Him as He mentions in the Holy Qur'aan: *'And whosoever puts his trust in Allah, He will be sufficient for Him.'* [At Talaaq, Verse 1] This in no way implies that simply trusting in Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) is enough; our efforts and strengths are also required. When a believer is certain that he has fully exerted every effort to overcome the obstacle in his life, he should place his confidence in Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) to take care of it.

The level of "Tawakkul" (reliance) a firm believer should strive to attain, is to come to a point where he wholly places his assurance in Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala)

alone while being tranquil and at peace with whatever Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has decided for him. It is to remain at peace whether or not the situation improves, or the burden is lifted. Acquiring this degree of conviction in the decree of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) undeniably plays a pivotal role in being able to lead a life of happiness, knowing that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) will never leave a believer empty-handed. Preserving such a mentality will make it easier to honour the pleasure of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) at every step.

Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) promises in the Holy Qur'aan: *'And He will provide him from (sources) he*

never could imagine. And whosoever puts his trust in Allah, then He will suffice him. Verily, Allah will accomplish his purpose. Indeed, Allah has set a measure for all things. [At Talaq, Verse 3] These words of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) are no doubt a source of comfort for a believing heart which desires nothing more than for Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) to be its light in times of darkness, shelter during the storm and its strength when all else fails it. This verse reassures a believer that no matter what goes wrong or who abandons him, Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) will never leave him. His help will always come, no matter how deferred it might feel. Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) timing is unflawed and is fixed by Him.

This verse also contains an invaluable point that must be understood; everything that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) wills to happen is for a reason and a 'purpose.' Nothing that a believer is made to endure is in vain and he will be compensated for even the smallest of pricks if he bears it patiently. Often a believer is made to suffer a loss or misfortune to elevate his rank in the afterlife and in the eyes of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). Many times, it may be so that he is spiritually cleansed and free from sin, while at times it may be to save him from a more severe calamity that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) had destined for him.

TWELVE ‘Remember me, I will remember you’

A believer who reaches a high level of spirituality in his Iman will have gained the true ‘Ma’rifah (Acknowledgement) of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) due to his forbearance and the patience he continuously exercised. He will have come to the realization that there is a deeper meaning and greater wisdom behind everything that befalls him. A person of intelligence will grasp that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) planned and allowed for such a difficulty to occur and He alone is the sole being who has the ability to remove it. The same Lord who is in control of the entire universe and delivers a system that is unblemished and without fault, can certainly take charge of and rectify our condition.

A believer will continue to suffer until he establishes a strong connection with Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) and attains a deep understanding of the majestic and exalted Lord for who He is. Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) mentions in the Holy Qur’aan: *‘Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find tranquillity.’* [Ar Ra’ad, Verse 28] Remembrance of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) comes in many forms and this verse is a clear indication that engaging in the verbal Dhikr of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) undeniably has an impact on the spirituality and physical state of a believer.

When a believer strives to make a conscious effort to praise Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) in abundance through Dhikr, it not only fills him with serenity, but he also becomes aware of Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) presence in his life and is drawn nearer to Him in rank. As mentioned in a Hadith recorded in 'SAHEEHAYN', Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) says *"If he remembers Me inwardly, I will remember him inwardly, and if he remembers Me in an assembly, I will remember him in a better assembly (i.e., in the assembly of angels)."* This is proof that a believer can achieve spiritual excellence through Dhikr and the more regularly he intentionally remembers his Lord,

the more beloved he will grow in the eyes of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala).

To be granted the ability to occupy himself in frequent Dhikr is a sign of being accepted by Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), as it is an indication that the believer is being mentioned and praised by Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) in the most sacred of gatherings. The more a believer absorbs himself in talking of his Lord, the more customary it will become for Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) to speak of him in the highest regard. There is no manner more superior for a believer to be honoured in.

There are various forms that a believer can devote himself in the remembrance of his Lord:

- The first and most obvious method of remembrance is to glorify Him verbally by way of uttering words of praise in the form of Adhkaar for example '*Subhaanallah*' or '*Astagfirullah*'.
- The second manner is for a believer to engage himself in the worship of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) by devoting himself in carrying out the actions which bring divine pleasure and reward, by
 - performing Salah or reciting the Holy Qur'aan for example.
 - The third form of being conscious of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) is to refrain from acts which bring His wrath by restraining himself from committing those actions which are considered sinful and unlawful as he knows Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) is 'All-Seeing', 'All-Hearing'.
 - The final method of remembering Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) is by expressing gratitude for all the favours he has been endowed with and exalting his Lord when he

marvels at the creation and is left in awe of their Maker and His magnificence.

It is without question that a single method from the aforementioned categories of Dhikr certainly has an effect on several aspects of our being and our life in general. A believer may initially find himself magnifying Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) mindlessly without actually pondering over what he is endlessly chanting. As time goes on, he will find that the words have left an acute effect on his heart and mind. He

will think of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) in whatever action he carries out, reviewing whether it will attain the mercy or displeasure of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). The constant Dhikr he has been busying himself in will over time lead him to those deeds which bring Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) happiness and prevent him from performing such deeds that are worthy of His anger.

'If anyone constantly seeks pardon (from Allah), Allah will appoint for him a way out of every distress and a relief from every anxiety and will provide sustenance for him from where he expects not.' [ABU DAWOOD]

The above hadith is proof of Dhikr not only having an impact on ourselves, but also our worldly affairs and those

pertaining to the Hereafter. If a believer has exerted his strengths and efforts in praising his Lord, why wouldn't the 'Most Merciful' and the 'Most Compassionate' remove his worries and fulfil his needs? The more regular a believer becomes in the remembrance of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), the more often he will sense his Lord taking care of his affairs and assuring matters work out in his favour.

Incessant engagement in Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) Dhikr, whether it be physically, verbally or mentally, will undeniably have a significant impact on his inner state. He will come to learn of the grace and glory of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) which will in turn enable him to grasp the fact that everything

is under the control of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) and that if He decides, anything is possible. This realization will leave a believer with a sense of calm knowing that his Lord will manage his affairs in a way that is most beneficial for him.

THIRTEEN A message in the Qur'aan

“So, when the Qur'aan is recited, listen to it attentively and be silent, so that you may receive mercy.” [Al-A'raaf: Verse 204]

The mention of 'mercy' in the above verse is of many kinds:

1. Mercy in the form of reward from Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) for engaging in worship and an act that is pleasing to Him.
2. Mercy in the sense that the divine words of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) are proven to have a soothing effect on a person's inner

state. Even those who do not believe in the Oneness of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) have admitted they have felt their spirits being lifted and experienced the deepest kind of serenity upon hearing them.

3. Those who are acquainted with the Arabic language or have access to the translation and Tafseer of its chapters should attempt to ponder

4. over the Godly message that is being delivered to us. The Holy Qur'aan was not only a source of comfort for Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam), but for all who will come until the Day of Judgement.
5. *'And we send down of the Qur'aan that which is healing and a mercy to those who believe.'* [Al-Israa, Verse 82] The Holy Qur'aan is not only a means of spiritual guidance, there is also mention of ingredients and methods of treating physical ailments. For example, Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) states: *'From their (bees') bellies comes out a drink of various colours in*

which there is a cure for people.' [An Nahl, Verse 69] in reference to the medicinal uses of honey.

6. The Holy Qur'aan is a guide to life wherein there is discussion and advice on the most basic principles such as performing ablution and relieving oneself. The methods prescribed in the Holy Qur'aan and within the Sunnah not only bring

7. great reward but have numerous health benefits also.
8. The Holy Qur'aan is filled with words of reassurance at the turn of every page. A believer will unquestionably find solace and a remedy for whatever struggles he may be facing. The Holy Qur'aan also shows us how we can attain this inner peace to the highest degree possible.

'And whoever fears Allah, He will make a way for him and provide for him from where does not expect.' [At-Talaaq, Verse 2]

The condition for receiving the help of Allah

(Subhaanahu Wata'aala). is that a believer strives for His pleasure. He should be conscious of fulfilling all the fundamental duties of Islam and refraining from indulging in those acts which invite the wrath of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). A believer should remain mindful of the fact that he is always under the observation of his Lord and so he should take great care in the way he handles affairs with the creation of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) too. Neglecting these simple elements suggests that a believer has overlooked the reality that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). knows of his every action and utterance and will hold him accountable for it

“Truly there is a reminder in this for anyone who has a heart, or who listens attentively with presence of mind.”
[Qaaf, Verse 37]

The ability to derive benefit and guidance from the Holy Qur’aan has been granted to every man, whether or not he has been bestowed with the wealth of Iman. Science has proven that its words hold the power to improve mental and emotional wellbeing. History has given us many stories of those whose hearts were void of any inclination towards Islam and have been guided towards the path of truth by merely hearing a few verses, an example of this can be found in the remarkable life of the second Caliph Umar Ibn Khattaab. The opening chapter of the Holy Qur’aan itself is known as ‘The chapter of healing’ and historic traditions are filled with tales of people being entirely

cured through it after being under the possession of Jinn or being afflicted with the most incurable of diseases.

“Will they not then ponder upon the Qur’aan or are there locks upon their hearts?” [Muhammad, Verse 24]

Those who have been referred to as having ‘locks upon their hearts’ are those whose hearts Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) has sealed from receiving guidance, i.e. the hypocrites and the disbelievers. Upon studying the Seerah, it is clear that the hypocrites and disbelievers in the era that the Holy Qur’aan was sent down, were natives of Arabia who were directly addressed through it by Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) but chose to ignore the warnings in it due to their arrogance and pride. This is something to take great heed from and assess whether our inability to derive peace from the words of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) is because of our own lack of faith.

FOURTEEN An intimate conversation

‘The first of his deeds for which a man will be called to account on the Day of Resurrection will be the prayers. If it is found to be perfect, he will be safe and successful. But if it is defective, he will be unfortunate and a loser.’

[TIRMIDHI]

Salah not only aids us within our worldly affairs but enables us to form a rooted connection with Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala). The strength of our bond with our Creator lies in the importance we give to Salah. If we prioritize Salah and fulfil it with concentration and humility, it is an indication that this bond is growing from strength to strength.

The key to success and prosperity is dependent on the condition of our Salah. Take the dawn prayer for example, it is read at the commencement of a new day and as recorded in Ahadith and experienced by many of us, if it is missed there is a noticeable void of barakah in a Muslim’s day. Salah was not prescribed to burden us, but as source of blessing for every aspect of our life.

“Indeed Salah has been prescribed on the believers at a fixed time.” [An Nisaa, Verse 103]

Salah was gifted to us on the night of Me’raj. It is an invitation to hold an intimate conversation with

Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) five times a day. If a believer cannot sacrifice a few minutes of his sleep to offer Fajr Salah or set aside some time to offer Asr salah during his work break, then he should look no further as to why his life is falling apart. Fix your Salah and everything else will fall into place.

If we have developed the habit of performing Salah within its appointed times, the next step is to check the state of our Salah. Do we look forward to this precious time in our day and pray with Khushu' (attentiveness) or are we occupied with thoughts of our endless list of things to do which makes us hasty?

"The nearest a servant comes to his Lord is when he is

in prostration." [Muslim]

We are endowed with the fortune of being able to stand before the Lord of the universe, the King of all kings several times a day and it is a blessing which should not be taken lightly. When a believer utters '*Allahu Akbar*' (Allah is the greatest) or '*Subhaana Rabbiyal A'laa*' (Glory be to my Lord the Most High), his focus should solely be on pondering over the greatness and grandeur of the Sovereign he is conversing with. Those who have attained the height of pleasure within their Salah, have described the posture of Sujood to the likeness of placing one's head in the lap of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). In every sitting within our Salah we repeat the dialogue between Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) and His

beloved Messenger: the honourable welcome Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) was given on the blessed night of Me'raj and his gratified response to his Lord, the Most Exalted.

Although Salah might seem like a series of spontaneous random actions, every posture has significant benefits to a person's health and wellbeing. Right from the purification a believer attains before its initiation, every phase consists of numerous benefits. The positions in Salah do not require a lot of energy and can be carried out by every believing man or woman, young or old. The movements within Salah allow easy contraction and relaxation of our muscles. Qiyaam enables the strengthening of the spine and improves our overall posture. The bowing in Ruku'

relieves stress and depression and aids digestion. The manner of Sujood improves blood flow to the brain and increases the strength of the neck muscles. The method of sitting in Tashahhud is especially helpful in maintaining the health of the legs. Circulation is improved and therefore it reduces swelling and fatigue in the feet and legs.

As well as many other rewards for our physical wellbeing, Salah is known to boost a person's mental health and relieve the mind of stress. In essence, Salah is not a duty that is simply to be fulfilled, but a comprehensive execution which includes benefits related to every aspect of our lives. Prayer will release us from worry in matters linked with our worldly life. Salah is a way of fulfilment of our needs in both this life and the one that is everlasting. Salah is a source of solace for those

with broken spirits and troubled minds. Salah was granted to unburden us in several ways and the absence of it will no doubt be detrimental to our general mood, spirituality and mental health.

FIFTEEN The perfect role model

'Indeed in the Messenger of Allah there is a fine example for you to follow for whoever hopes to meet Allah and the last day and remembers Allah in abundance.' [Al-Ahzaab, Verse 21]

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) was the ultimate example of a man who perfected every duty he was assigned. He showed perfection in every aspect of his life. He was the most devoted of servants in his role as a slave to Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala). He was the most loving of fathers and the most supportive of husbands. He was the most humble of leaders and the most compassionate of Messengers. He touched the lives of all

those who encountered him. Even his enemies were compelled to sing nothing but praise for him.

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) was the favoured Prophet of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), but he was also a man with the ability to feel pain and sadness just like you and me. He was made accustomed to loss from before he was brought into the world in the death of his father Abdullah. By the tender age of just eight years of age, he had already endured the losses of three primary figures in any person's life. He witnessed the death of all but one of his seven children during his lifetime. He lost two

eminent pillars of strength, both his cherished wife Khadijah and his dear uncle Abu Talib in the same year. Both of them played a pivotal part in supporting him in the earlier stages of the spreading of Islam.

In spite of being a beloved Prophet of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), he took the empathetic route in choosing to live a life of utmost poverty, showing us the height of humility and humanity he possessed. He was selected as the final Messenger and for the crucial duty of preaching the Oneness of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) and rescuing those who were headed for a permanent residence in Hellfire. The depth of his empathy often caused him great sadness when his own people chose to reject Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) message and opted

to mock him, conspire to assassinate him, and drive him out of the city where he had spent over five decades of his life.

Despite being deeply grieved on many occasions throughout his life, his companions declare: *“I had not seen anyone who smiled more than the Messenger of Allah.”* [TIRMIDHI] Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) is described in the Holy Qur’aan as *‘conforming himself to moral excellence’* [Al Qalam, Verse 4] even though he bore the weight of the entire world on his shoulders. In reference to his treatment of children, Anas ibn Malik says: *“I remained in the service of Rasulullah for ten years.”*

He never reprimanded me or questioned me on why I had done something or why I hadn't done something.”
[SAHEEHAYN]

The examples of the kindness of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) are many and this was what inclined his most notable enemies to go from being set on killing him to accepting the religion of peace. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) chose to pardon the people of Taa’if who pelted him with stones to the extent that his shoes were filled with blood. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) dismissed the ill-treatment of his disbelieving neighbour who would go out of her way to accumulate her household garbage so that she could shower it upon Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) as he left for the masjid each

day and visited her in her sickness. Because of his moral conduct, his neighbour entered the fold of Islam and the city of Taa'if now flourishes in various works of Deen.

Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) would have readily destroyed anyone who harmed Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) upon his mere requesting and provided him with many opportunities to do so. It is a prophetic tradition to repay any harm inflicted on them by their people with the words *'My reward is upon none but Allah.'* [Sabaa, Verse 47], a statement every believer should take note from; forgive those who wrong you, repel evil with kindness and hope for a reward from Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala).

Had Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) wanted, He could have decreed for the Prophets and Messengers to be from among the pure creation of angels who lack the ability to

feel grieved or saddened. Yet Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) and indeed all the Messengers that came before him were selected to be from amongst the menfolk, so that we could draw inspiration from them and follow their examples- not only in the way they devoted themselves to the worship of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala), but also the manner in which they dealt with the many hardships in their lives. If the most noblest of men and dearest of creation was tested to such extremes despite being free from sin, then surely it is only right for us to bear nothing more than a fraction of what he had to endure without complaint.

SIXTEEN A promise of Paradise

“Oh tranquil soul. Return to your Lord, pleased and pleasing to Him. And enter among my [righteous] servants. And enter my Paradise.” [Al Fajr, Verses 27-30]

Every individual to tread the face of this earth has been granted the opportunity to attain Jannah. After a slave is lowered into his grave, he will be shown his place in heaven or hell according to whether he died upon fitrah or not. A believing soul will be shown the palaces and gardens that await him in Jannah, along with his dwelling in Hellfire, had he died upon disbelief. Similarly, those who die without declaring the Oneness of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) will be shown the horrors that

await them in Jahannam and also be made aware of what could have been their eternal home had they passed in the state of being a Muslim. The mercy of Allah (Subhaanahu Wata’aala) is so vast that He has reserved a place in the gardens of Jannah for both his believing and disbelieving servants- it is up to us to prove that we are deserving of such bounties.

“The life of this world compared to the hereafter is as if one of you were to put his finger in the ocean and take it out again, then compare the water that is

on his finger to the water that remains in the ocean.”

[MUSLIM]

The worldly life and indeed everything related to it is merely a fleeting moment. No matter how stretched a trial may seem, it is nothing in comparison to the everlasting life that awaits us, even if it is lifelong.

‘And therein is whatever the souls desire and [what] delights the eyes and you will reside therein evermore.’

[Az Zukhruf, Verse 71]

What could be more pleasing to the soul than to dwell eternally in a place where no sorrow or sadness exists knowing that it will be where he remains forever? What could bring the soul greater joy knowing that the bounties of his home in paradise are endless and will never cease?

‘I have prepared for my righteous slaves that which no eye has ever seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has ever perceived.’ [HADITH QUDSI, BUKHARI]

Although the pleasures of Jannah are far more beautiful and satisfying than we could possibly comprehend, we have been given glad tidings of several bounties in the Holy Qur’aan and prophetic narrations in order to encourage us to strive for them and also to gladden our hearts of the life that is yet to come.

The final person to enter paradise will be bestowed with a home that is eight to ten times more greater than this entire world. Everyone will be the same age and every heart will be free of ill feelings such as malice and envy. [Al Hijr, Verse 47] The palaces of the residents of Jannah will be made of bricks of gold and silver, with the cement being of musk. [TIRMIDHI] There will be streams of water, wine, honey and milk [Muhammad, Verse 15]- none of which's likeness can be compared to anything of this world. They will be given plates and vessels made of gold [Az Zukhruf, Verse 71] and will eat such food that will satisfy them to such an extent that they will never experience hunger or thirst ever again. The people of Jannah will be adorned in garments of fine silk and

jewellery of pearls and gold [Al Hajj, Verse 32] and will have young male slaves at their disposal who will look like scattered pearls [Al Insaan, Verse 19]. The men of paradise will be granted several damsels of Jannah towards whom their wives will bear no resentment. *'[Some] faces that day will be radiant. Looking to their Lord.'* [Al Qiyamah, Verses 22-23] Finally, the most bountiful gift the dwellers of Jannah will receive is to be able to meet their creator Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) in the state that He is wholeheartedly pleased with them and they themselves are entirely satisfied with how they have been compensated for all their struggles in this worldly life.

The pleasures mentioned in this chapter are truly only a fraction of those that have been reserved for us in the next life. A day in the hereafter is said to be equivalent to the duration of a thousand years of this worldly life.

Whatever hardships a person may be enduring, no matter how soul shattering, have been fixed a time when they will be lifted. Those who bear every inconvenience that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has appointed for them without complaint, will surely find paradise and its treasures to be their eternal abode.

SEVENTEEN Practical Advice

1. Safeguard yourself from harm by establishing a strong connection with Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala)- As well as maintaining the five daily prayers, a believer should protect himself with the recitation of Surah Yaseen, Mu'awwidhatayn and the miscellaneous prescribed Ad'iyah mentioned in the Holy Qur'aan and Sunnah. This will not only help his mental state but also ward off black magic and the evil eye, etc.
2. Occupy the mind- It is fundamental for a

believer to limit occasions when the mind is idle and provide it with opportunities to wander into the oblivion of dark thoughts, especially if he suffers from mental health issues.

3. Do what makes you happy- On the days when a believer is feeling particularly blue, he should remind himself of the sheer joy of being alive and the beauty of life. Whether it is sports, crafts, or just

4. being in the natural world and appreciating the splendour of Allah's (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) creation, take some time out to do something you truly enjoy.
5. Confide in someone you can trust- Bottling his emotions, will only worsen the mental health of a believer. Alongside seeking proper professional help, speaking to a close one will leave his heart feeling lighter. If the idea of sharing his thoughts fills him with anxiety, he should at least release them by writing them down.
6. Surround yourself with positivity- It is

scientifically proven that we adopt the habits of the top five people we spend the most time with. What we surround ourselves with externally, will eventually impact us in some way. It is crucial for a believer to not only be around those who strive to excel in their religion, but also have an overall positive outlook on life itself. Cut out toxic people and situations and surround yourself with people

7. who genuinely wish the best for you.
8. Sleep well- Lack of sleep might not affect a person for a night or two, but constantly depriving the body of rest can slow the function of the brain and also leave him feeling irritated. Caffeine is a temporary fix, but it is far from healthy to develop a dependency on it.
9. Eat well- We've all heard it: "You are what you eat." An excess of junk food can not only lead to serious health problems such as diabetes and cholesterol, but also affect the

brain's ability to function properly.

Magnesium found in foods like spinach, kale and bananas protects the brain from neurotoxins. Vitamin B12 which is present in poultry, yoghurt, milk and cereal aids the memory and uplifts the mood. Vitamin E which is found in the various types of nuts can delay the development of Alzheimer's. Eat right to feel right.

10. Take a break, but don't quit. - It's okay to take some time and pamper yourself. A believer is neither going to be able to fulfil his religious obligations or his worldly duties if he doesn't take care of himself. It's perfectly okay to stop and recharge for a day or two. It only means you'll come back stronger.

Always Remember...

There is a purpose for every pain and every pain will exhibit many hidden treasures. Every single prick brings you one step closer to attaining divine pleasure. No sorrow or struggle is permanent, the happiness will come just as freely as any heartbreak. Everything has been equally measured by Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala).

But while it has come to visit, know that its stay is only fleeting and full of hidden bounties. Be sure to patiently endure it in the reassurance that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) is never far away; He remains ever watchful over you and for every second you embrace this passing trial; your patience is being recorded as an act of worship.

When you feel overwhelmed by the severity of the trial you have been made to bear, take comfort in the knowledge that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) has handpicked you to grow closer to Him and gain immeasurable reward that will not only aid you in this worldly life, but also raise you in status in the life that is yet to come.

Live in faith that nothing is difficult for Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) and with His decree any struggle can be overcome. After all, He is the One

who determined for you to bear it. Seek his guidance through constant prayer and supplication and it will fill you with ease knowing that He will never leave you helpless.

Know that human life is made up of both joy and sorrow and it is natural to feel saddened during the lows of life, just as anyone is expected to feel elated during the highs.

Every person to dwell on earth was made to endure hardships, regardless of how religious they were; in fact, the most religious of believers bore the severest of trials.

I pray you have now gained a deeper understanding of how struggles come to bless you and are a means of cleansing and purification for the soul rather than a

punishment. I pray that through this book, you are now able to see the wider picture and recognize the endless forms of divine love each hardship contains by understanding that Allah (Subhaanahu Wata'aala) never tests us to burden us, but to shower His endless mercies and blessings upon us and prepare us for the life that is yet to come.